

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VALLET 00211 181444Z
ACTION EUR-08

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FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7241

C O N F I D E N T I A L VALLETTA 0211

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, FR, IT, MT
SUBJECT: ITALIAN/FRENCH TALKS WITH MINTOFF

REF: VALLETTA 0208

1. DEPARTMENT WILL HAVE SEEN OUR REPORTING CABLE ON CURRENT STATUS OF ITALIAN/FRENCH TALKS WITH MINTOFF. ITALIAN AMBASSADOR PARTICULARLY, AND FRENCH SOMEWHAT LESS SO, ARE KEEPING US INFORMED WITHOUT PRESSING US OVERMUCH FOR SPECIFIC POLICY REACTIONS, AND WE ARE RIGHTLY NOTHDNGAGED BEYOND THAT. MINTOFF HAS MADE NO DEMANDS OF ME IN CONTEXT OF THESE TALKS, THOUGH SEPARATELY HE HAS ASKED FOR ASSISTANCE IN GAINING RENEWED ACCESS TO SURPLUS U.S. EQUIPMENT AND IN CONVINCING U.S. BUSINESS TO INVEST HERE. MINTOFF APPEARS FOR PRESENT TO HAVE ACCEPTED WITHOUT CHALLENGE THE POSTURE WE HAVE TAKEN THAT HIS CONCEPT FOR MALTA'S FUTURE IS BASICALLY ONE INVOLVING OUR EUROPEAN FRIENDS, THAT WE HAVE NO HOSTILITY TOWARD IT, AND THAT INDEED WE APPLAUD HIS EFFORTS TO DEVELOP MALTA ECONOMICALLY TO MANAGE A POST-1979 SITUATION.

2. THERE REMAINS HOWEVER THE NORTH AFRICAN CONNECTION, ESPECIALLY LIBYA. THE LATTER IS AVOTEDLY MINTOFF'S TRUMP
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CARD AND HE SAYS HE IS PREPARED TO PLAY IT. A JUDGMENT WHETHER HE WILL IN FACT DO SO IS ONE THAT THE ITALIANS AND FRENCH IN THE FIRST INSTANCE MUST MAKE, BUT SOME OF THE REST OF US WILL NEED TO MAKE A SIMILAR JUDGMENT IN TIME. WHETHER MINTOFF WILL PLAY IT OBVIOUSLY DEPENDS ON MANY FACTORS: E.G. HIS OWN PERCEPTION OF WHAT IT IS WORTH IN TERMS OF TANGIBLE RETURNS FROM LIBYA TO HELP MEET THE

VERY REAL NEEDS OF 1979, MINTOFF'S PERCEPTION OF THE IMPACT INTERNALLY OF A STILL CLOSER LINK WITH LIBYA, AND MINTOFF'S OWN POLITICAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL MAKEUP. WE DOUBT IN ANY EVENT HE WILL ACTUALLY PLAY THIS TRUMP CARD FOR SOME TIME YET, AND IT IS OBVIOUSLY IMPORTANT THAT WE NOT APPEAR SUSCEPTIBLE TO HIS USING IT AGAINST US. MEANWHILE, WE WILL WELCOME CONTINUING REPORTING FROM BOTH EMBASSIES TRIPOLI AND ALGIERS ON HOW FAR WE JUDGE IT LIKELY LIBYA AND ALGERIA WILL ACTUALLY GO TO HELP MINTOFF IMPLEMENT HIS CONCEPT.

3. THERE IS ALSO THE FURTHER ASPECT OF OUR OWN READINESS ULTIMATELY TO ACQUIESCE IN AN ARRANGEMENT FOR MALTA'S FUTURE THAT INVOLVES NORTH AFRICANS, INCLUDING LIBYA, AS PRINCIPAL GUARANTORS. IF MINTOFF'S CONCEPT WERE TO BECOME REALITY AS HE PRESENTLY CONCEIVES IT, OUR BOTTOM LINE STRATEGIC INTEREST OF DENIAL TO THE SOVIETS WOULD BE ASSURED. BUT IT WOULD BE AN ASSURANCE IN WHICH THE LIBYANS HAVE A CONSIDERABLE ROLE IN HOW IT IS IN FACT IMPLSVENTED.

4. I RAISE THIS POINT NOT FOR AN IMMEDIATE ANSWER BUT BECAUSE IT SEEMS TO US HERE THAT IT IS ONE WE HAVE NOT YET SUFFICIENTLY ADDRESSED. IT INVOLVES BROADER POLITICAL/ STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS THAN WE CAN ADDRESS FROM VALLETTA. WE HAVE SKIRTED THE ISSUE WHEN IT HAS BEEN RAISED WITH US SO FAR, RELYING ON EXISTING GUIDANCE TO THE EFFECT THAT WE HAVE NO OBJECTION TO SECURITY AND ECONOMIC GUARANTEES FOR MALTA BY EUROPEAN REPEAT EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. WE WILL BE ADDRESSING THIEIPOINT IN OUR OWN CONTINUING ASSESSMENT K
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FROM THIS VANTAGE POINT BUT IF THE DEPARTMENT HAS ANY INTERIM GUIDANCE WE WILL WELCOME IT.

5. DEPARTMENT REPEAT AS APPROPRIATE.SLAINGEN

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Message Attributes

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